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RAIL TRAVEL NEWS

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VOL. 7 NO. 17
FIRST ISSUE OF
OCTOBER 1977
#161

THIS ISSUE FOLLOWS THE SECOND AUGUST ISSUE

A EUROPEAN LOOKS AT AMTRAK

ON THE COVER:

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Rail Canada

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION: Sleeper-lounge buses are being phased out; the day bus is already gone and the night bus is said to be next. The ONR's NORTHLAND is to run with sleeper thru the winter, since the Canadian Transport Commission has advised CN that it must continue the trains until evaluation of TEE NORTHLANDER in Canadian winter weather can be made. It is reported that ONR's sleeper averages 50% occupancy.

VIA RAIL CANADA will effectively begin operation next April 1, altho the marketing services have begun as of June 1. Newspaper ads show CP 40-41 as the ATLANTIC LIMITED, which had not been the case for some time. Canadian passenger deficits in 1976 were reportedly $226 million, of which the Dominion picked up 80% and the railways the remaining 20% (CP $10 million and CN $36 million).

NEWFOUNDLAND TRANSPORTATION STUDIED: Transport 2000 has submitted a brief on this topic to the Commission of Inquiry into Newfoundland transportation (Sep 21). The brief argues for revitalization of operations on the Newfoundland Railway (a CN subsidiary). The Railway is a 3' 6" gauge line built between 1881 and 1900. The consumer organization argues that the freight operations of the railway should be improved, and makes specific recommendations. It also makes some very cogent suggestions for passenger services on the line, which were discontinued partially in 1969. The brief favors an "Expedo" passenger rail service examined in an earlier Trans-Newfoundland Corridor Study. It also suggests improving the existing St. John's-Argentia service by rescheduling it to provide direct connections with ships in each direction. Finally, it promotes the idea of tourist services--selling existing mixed train runs as tourist attractions on the scenic island, and providing a one-day "out and back" service from Port-aux-Basques, possibly using steam equipment. Such railways are prospering elsewhere, the report notes, such as in Europe and Australia, and elsewhere in Canada. Because the CN is a "centralized" and "distant" manager, it does not adequately handle and promote these colorful and potentially useful services. "The present decline of the Newfoundland Railway is found to be the result of not applying normal innovations found on other narrow-gauge railways" concludes the report.

VIA RAIL CANADA president Frank Roberts told the Vancouver Sun in an interview in mid-September that he favors a "truly transcontinental service" instead of the CTC's idea in its preferred plan of a train crossing the western half of Canada and servicing a number of cities along the route. Instead, Roberts wants a "limited-stop train" with smaller feeder trains from other western cities to connect with it, in order to save time on transcontinental runs. Roberts divides the VIA Rail services into three categories: long distance, intercity, and local.

TEN NEW TRAINSETS are wanted by VIA Rail, president Frank Roberts said in an Edmonton press conference late in September. They would cost $90 million, and half of them would be used in Western Canada, three in Central Canada, and two in the Maritime provinces. Roberts is thinking of some new Western routes, and he named as possibilities Winnipeg-Saskatoon-Edmonton and Winnipeg-Regina-Calgary. If the federal government won't finance the equipment purchases, he said, the new rail corporation won't be able to meet its goal of a nationwide intermodal rail passenger system within 2½ years--the time estimated for delivery of the new cars. And Mr. Roberts is claiming a commitment to city center stations rather than suburban ones.

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT

"MINUTE MAN SERVICE"

THE D&H ALCO PA diesels arrived in Boston on Sept 30 on lease to the B&M. Engine 17 was ready at South Station for action by Saturday night, Oct 1. Three of the units will be used as singles on the 3 Boston-Framingham trains, while the fourth will be standby and the first to get cab signals. Eventually all will have cab signals so they can work the mainline to Providence. They are costing the MBTA $150 each per day, and will help insure the consistency of new South Side schedules that will take effect Oct 30 and which will include hourly service on the mainline between Boston and Attleboro plus other improvements.

THE "EL CAMINO", the $2-million Los Angeles County 8-car commuter train acquired on the motion of Supervisor Baxter Ward (see RTN, 2nd Nov. 1976), will continue to idle on a warehouse siding in the city of Bell, alongside the Long Beach Freeway. L.A. County, joined by Orange and San Diego Counties and two rail unions with Greyhound intervening, will meet defendant Santa Fe Jan 10-13, 1978 at a Public Utilities Commission hearing to decide whether the PUC has jurisdiction to order the Santa Fe to provide a commuter service. If it has, then County may put on two witnesses, to be followed by a 2- or 3-month cost study by Santa Fe. PUC staff believes the Commission has jurisdiction.

OFFICIALS OF CLEVELAND'S RTA were meeting with their board of trustees early this month to argue the merits of awarding a $30.9 million contract for 48 new Shaker Rapid Transit cars to the Italian firm, Breda Costruzioni Ferroviara. Pullman-Standard had filed a suit against UMTA, claiming that the RTA did not take into account customs duties which would have raised the total price. Pullman-Standard was the next lowest bidder.

RAIL TRANSIT OFFICIALS are "outraged" over an energy efficiency report prepared by the Congressional Budget Office which concludes that highway vehicles are more efficient energy users than mass transit systems. The use of buses on existing highways might use less energy than new rail systems, if the energy of building the system is included, the report indicated. The American Public Transit Association's director, B. R. Stokes, told the New York Times (Oct 9) that statements in the report are "extremely irresponsible." The report leaned in favor of private automobiles with car pools and van pools, as well as buses. Stokes said that even a modest 4% per year increase in automobile use would create greater oil usage by 1990 than at present, even tho autos averaged 24 miles per gallon by that time. The Times called the issuing of the report the "opening skirmish in a battle between public transit proponents and what is left of the highway lobby."

SAN DIEGO COUNTY, California is interested in obtaining the SP's San Diego and Arizona Eastern Railway line that the railroad wants to abandon after hurricane damage, in order to turn it into a light rail commuter line. Cost of this would be far less than a brand new rail transit system being contemplated.

SOUTHERN PACIFIC'S COMMUTE line riders will soon be buying discount tickets from regional transit agencies. Early in October, Governor Brown signed a bill that legalizes the procedure. San Mateo County's SamTrans will be first, with 30% discount tickets to county residents. SP has no objection to this form of indirect subsidy, but it still wants to drop the service altogether.

MARIN COUNTY OFFICIALS in California are "enraged" over the Golden Gate Bridge directors' action this month in deciding to give the San Francisco Muni $1 million yearly out of bridge tolls and increased Golden Gate Transit bus fares.

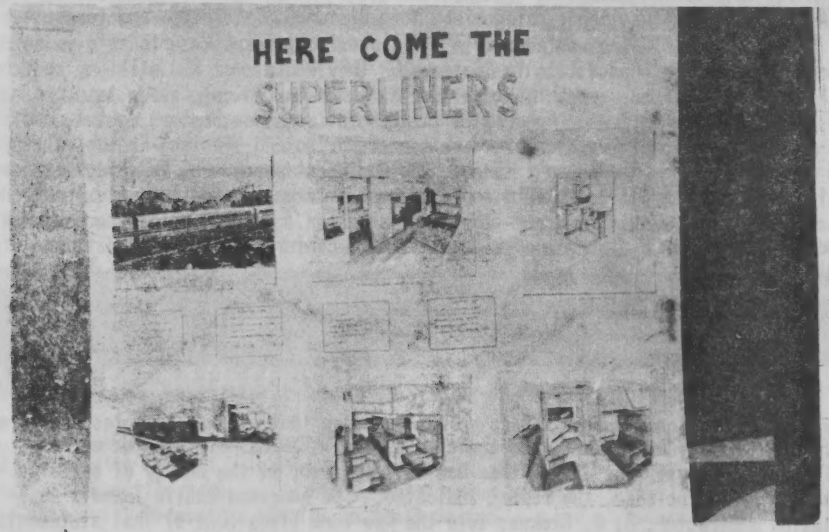
THE HOUSTON AREA is forming a transit agency, to be called Houston Metropolitan Transit Authority.

PITTSBURGH & LAKE ERIE Railroad wants to abandon its Beaver Falls-Pittsburgh unless subsidies can be obtained from the Allegheny County Port Authority.

SECRECY AND THE BI-LEVEL CARS

Officials at the DOT's test track at Boulder, Colorado aren't letting visitors into the interiors of the new bi-level coaches being tested there these days. The restrictive conditions became known late in September when members of an Association of Railway Museums convention tour paid a planned visit to the facility. Officials took great pains to keep the visitors out of the cars, and told them that they must not take any photographs of the car insides, altho they were free to photograph the exteriors. The ostensible reason cited was that Rail Travel News had published a photo of a coach interior (in the First June issue) that showed sacks of rocks placed in the car to simulate passenger weight.

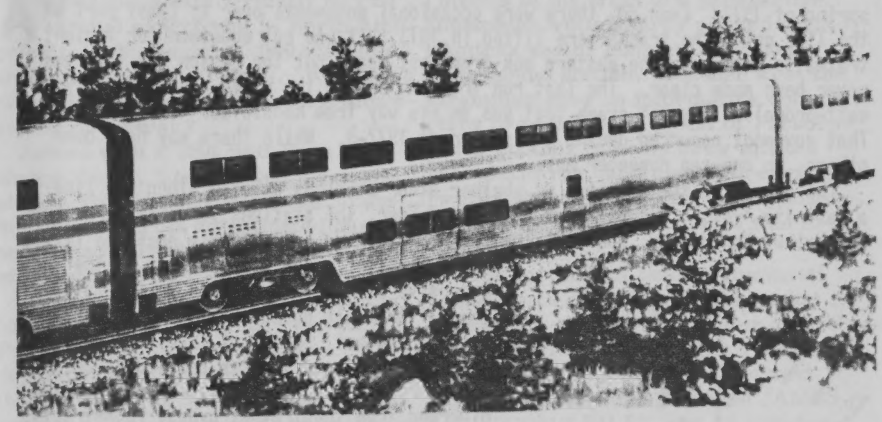
In actuality, the photo in RTN, by Michael Davis, was reproduced from a color slide taken hastily under adverse conditions, and it printed so poorly that the only details visible were the general shape of the windows and the pattern on one or two of the seat backs. The original slide showed no rock bags in it--the only unusual item visible was a clear plastic seat cover to protect the upholstery.



(Above:) A display of bi-level artist sketches at the Pullman-Standard plant.

(Right:) This photo was blamed by officials at Boulder for the lockout of visitors from the bi-level coach interiors. We hope reproduction here is better than it was in RTN's First June issue. View is of the upper level of car 34002. Most of the seats have transparent plastic covers; one in foreground is removed to show better the upholstery pattern of browns and tans. Seat wings are pale beige, curtains gold.

The story naturally gave rise to speculation that something was untoward in the car interiors. There are rumors circulating that Amtrak will not accept the first few coaches (the one pictured in RTN was #34002--no car 34001 ever left the Pullman-Standard plant as far as we can ascertain) because of design deviations. Other stories indicate that Amtrak will accept them when modifications are made.



Whether or not these rumors are true, other bi-level problems are plaguing Amtrak. Work is behind schedule at this time, and to make matters worse, the Pullman-Standard plant was hit Oct 1 by a nationwide strike of steelworkers. Work at the plant is at a standstill as we write these lines, and an Amtrak spokesman expressed fear that a public showing of the cars cannot be made even this year. Obviously, the timetable for placing the cars on the Seattle-Chicago trains is way behind schedule, and one supposes that it could be next spring before the cars are in service.

CARS & CONSISTS

*SOUTHWEST LIMITED, train 4, Kansas City Sep 25: engines 522, 508; cars 1080 (LA-NY), 1063, 9990, 9915, 9948, 9972, 9982, 9920, 2211 "Indian Drum", 2753 "Palm Leaf", dome slpr 9221, dome slpr 9211. (Dome 9220 was 3rd slpr on train 3 leaving Kansas City Oct 5.)

*ARROWHEAD, train 761, Duluth Sep 17: engines 411, 463 (E8s); cars 1750, 6452, 6450, 7200, 8399, dome 9452, dome 9500, 6805, 6800.

*"Rails to the Range" special train Duluth-Grand Rapids MN, RT Sep 18 (all equipment BN unless noted): engines 668 (F7A), 761 (F7B), 771 (F7B), 718 (F7A); heater car 16, baggage 227, coaches 1116 & 1115, diner "Lake Michigan", diner 1250 "Lake of the Isles", VIA CN coach 5579, CN coach 5519, DM&IR combine W24, "St. Croix River", "Deschutes River", DM&IR business car "Northland." Trip sponsored by Lake Superior Transportation Museum.

*NORTH COAST HIAWATHA, train 10, Seattle Aug 12: engines 533, 577; cars 1036, 4526, 4857, 4525, 5691, 3252 "Metcalf", 8067, 2420, 2233 "Sebring". No domes.

*B&M Passenger Extra #6212 "Foliage Unlimited" Boston-North Adams MA Oct 2: B&M RDCs 6212 (kitchen car), 6144, 6113, 6211.

*Inspection train, San Jose CA northbound Oct 7: engine SP 9073; DOT inspection cars T-1 & T-3, SP business car 131 "Sacramento".

*BROADWAY LIMITED, train 41, Harrisburg Sep 19: engine 914 (to Harrisburg), E8s in ABBA pattern Harrisburg-Chicago; cars 2 mail cars (Nos?), 1056, 5266, 5442, 2642 "Pacific Waves", 2408 "Loch Lomond", 5270, 5269, 5253, 3405, twin-unit diner 8802-8803, 3209 "Rippling Stream", 2400 "Snohomish River", 2553 "Central Park", 2302 "Humming Bird."

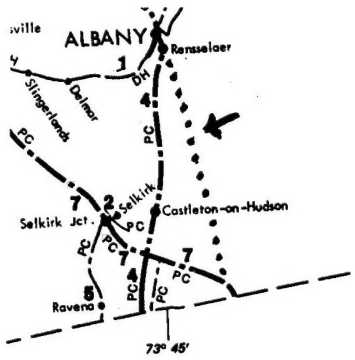
MORE ON THE ROGER LEWIS MEMORIAL ROADBED

by Richard L. Walker

(SEE ALSO: "ALONG THE MISSING 12 MILES", FIRST AUGUST RTN)

The right of way was taken out of service shortly after Amtrak began, in the spring of 1971. Even so, there were occasional movements over at least part of the line until the tracks were lifted in 1973. It was not uncommon for freight trains to back onto the eastern end from Post Road, but the reason for this has never been made clear. The last run from one end to the other was apparantly a self-propelled "Burro" crane that was on its way from Rensselaer to Chatham, NY. That movement occurred during the winter of 1972-3. While there may have been others, no one can remember any.

The answer to the question of whether other stations existed along the line is a definite "yes." Heading east from Rensselaer, the stations were East Greenbush Brookview, Van Hoesen, and Post Road. Brookview had a pleasantly designed little stone station, which was replaced by the less expensive wooden lean-to type in the later years. From all sources that I have been able to contact, both East Greenbush and Van Hoesen were of the shelter configuration, tho at Post Road, where the old B&A mainline diverged from the freight bypass (constructed in 1926-7), the wooden station building still stands. It supposedly served as an operator's cabin after all local passenger service was discontinued over the B&A (1960 or 1961), but is presently very abandoned and derelict. All other station-type structures along the presently abandoned right of way were torn down when local service ceased.



Above: Approximate location of the "missing 12 miles" (dotted line).

The line was originally double track, and Brookview had two team tracks for the use of local farmers. There was also a station track, so that Brookview actually had three tracks past the station. Even after CTC and single-tracking of the line, the team tracks remained--in fact, right up till abandonment and the lifting of the rails. Between Van Hoesen and Post Road there is also a particularly wide spot in the roadbed, and some of the old timers in this area seem to remember there being another passing track and perhaps another team track at that point. But no one is positive.

Estimates for the restoration of the 12-mile line have jumped from 3 or 4 million dollars at the time it was lifted to between 11 and 14 million now, depending on whom one talks to, Amtrak or New York State DOT. While restoration of the line would speed up the B&A section of the LAKE SHORE LIMITED, with all the other financial woes now facing Amtrak one can only wonder if it will be worth it for one train a day in each direction. The scenic backup move is fast becoming one of the wonders of trains 448-449.

To be realistic, even in the "good old days" before Amtrak, it was faster to take the bus from Albany east to Springfield and Boston, thanks to the Massachusetts Turnpike. It seems that most of the regular customers for #448-449 are from west of Buffalo. I can even drive from Castleton-on-Hudson to Boston, legally, in less than the time it takes the train to reach Springfield from Albany/Rensselaer. I personally doubt that replacing the missing 12 miles of track will effect any major changes in the revenues of the B&A train--at least not to the tune of roughly $10 million.

A EUROPEAN LOOKS AT AMTRAK

by James E. Killen

A European with virtually no rail travel experience in North America travels almost 10,000 miles on an Amtrak USA Rail Pass. What does he experience and what are his impressions of Amtrak?

Armed with a USA Rail Pass Exchange Form, I confronted the agent at New York's Penn Station to obtain my tickets. This complicated business was dealt with competently and efficiently. So far so good.

A Descent down a poorly-lit staircase to the dim and smoky depths of Penn Station as a funereal voice gave departure information for train 181, the EMBASSY to Washington, did not seem a promising start to any journey. But waiting below was a sleek Amfleet train with a refreshingly cool and tastefully decorated interior. A walk to the head revealed GG-1 power and a friendly engineer who offered a brief history of this famous class and the opinion that they ride better than more recent equipment. He said the main differences from European railroads would be poorer track and timekeeping.

The former was evident as soon as the train began to move and at various points on the journey, but the train did keep time and carried a healthy load of passengers. I disliked the way the doors between coaches would clunk back and forth while locked in the open position, and found that the P.A. system was inoperative in our coach. Nevertheless, I was impressed with my Northeast Corridor trip, which was rounded off with a friendly wave from the engineer as I detrained.

Friendliness was certainly the keynote of my next trip on the SHENANDOAH to Cincinnati. Each boarding passenger got a friendly "Good morning" from the conductor who drew attention to the Amdinette car as he collected tickets. At Cumberland the conductor spent some time explaining the merits of the train to a prospective customer while nearby a faded anti-Amtrak poster hung at the locked Greyhound station. Further west the trainman gave an informative commentary over the P.A. West of Parkersburg another friendly crew chatted about Amtrak, and there were unkind words about last winter's suspension of service just as patronage was increasing.

The last signal before Cincinnati was reached 25 minutes early, but it remained red for 45 minutes, to yield a late arrival at River Road Station.

Back at River Road Station next morning, the Chicago-bound JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY was 45 minutes late due to bad track. I was told that this was normal and that some if not all of the time would be made up by Chicago, as the train would "really highball" on the good track. Then further news came that the train had succumbed to technical difficulties.

Eventual departure with about fifty passengers was 1 hour, 25 minutes late. "God willing and the devil keeping out of it" said the voice over the P.A., "some or all of this time will be made up by Chicago." Indeed, arrival at Union Station was just one hour behind.

This was my first trip in an Amcoach with leg- and footrests, curtains, and--best of all--no armrests. It was one of the best cars I found on my entire trip.

In European schools we learn that Chicago is a major railway center. But the RILEY has considerable difficulty in entering Union Station. Is this route with branchline wandering and backup movements really the most direct?

My next train was to have been the INTER-AMERICAN--destination Temple, Texas, where I would wait 5 1/2 hours for the LONE STAR to Houston. An early morning sleepy-eyed re-

The author, who is Lecturer in Geography at the University of Dublin, spent late August and early September riding the Amtrak system.

quest for an upgrade to roomette brought the reply that they did not exist. Yet the schedule at the counter clearly stated "Sleeping Car Service." How could Amtrak advertise non-existing service? The Station Supervisor was sympathetic and suggested that I should travel throughout by the LONE STAR, as I might find the INTER-AMERICAN less than satisfactory. Unimpressed and disorganized, I obeyed.

A Museum of Science and Industry exhibit comprised a model of part of the Santa Fe Railway. Riding on the real thing began that afternoon at 4:30 precisely when the LONE STAR commenced its cautious exit from Union Station. It was pleasant to find everything in my assigned car "Pine Mesa" in perfect working order. I was impressed with the efficient design of the roomette.

Dining car service was efficient and friendly, and I was surprised that so few passengers used this facility. I had an excellent and most reasonably priced meal. Another new experience was the lounge car. Altho these cars tended to be garishly decorated, I enjoyed them, for they offered a unique opportunity to meet one's fellow passengers in an informal atmosphere. Unfortunately, the air conditioning in the lounge car faded away early on the second day, and with it went the attendant and finally his customers.

The LONE STAR was not a good timekeeper. Just out of Chicago, there was a 20-minute delay at McCook, Illinois for unknown reasons. By Fort Worth track repairs had put us 55 minutes down and no time was gained to Houston.

I need not have worried about my connection to the Los Angeles-bound SUNSET LIMITED which was reported stuck behind a slow freight. The train appeared one hour late. After the well-filled coach section came: lounge 3393, diner 8035, sleepers 2622 "Pacific Ocean," 2620 "Pine Gorge," 2814 "Altamaha River" (my car--the thru car from N.Y.), and dome lounge sleeper 9250 "Silver Horizon" (not in use).

In the absence of my porter, I stored my luggage and stepped down to inspect the train. The dome car was an unexpected surprise--but alas, two business cars were being attached behind. "Why must our view be obstructed?" I asked an official-looking gentleman. "Because this is the Southern Pacific" came the somewhat ambiguous reply.

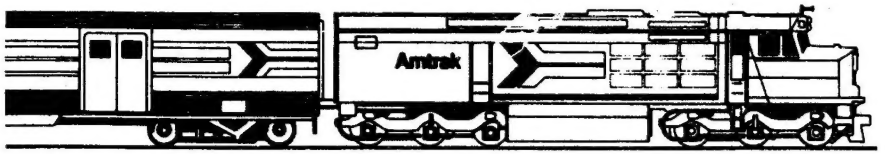
The dome car, I discovered, lacked air conditioning and lights. A walk forwards revealed a hot diner with the steward unhappily surveying his bare car. "Will it be possible to serve food tomorrow?" I asked. The steward assured me that the crew would do their very best--and to their greatest credit this is exactly what they did.

Back in "Altamaha River" the window seemed to be playing curious tricks with the passing lights. Was this the dreaded Lexan? In the morning I awakened west of Del Rio. Southern Texas appeared swathed in fog which closer inspection showed to be due to a disgraceful semi-see-thru window rather than atmospheric conditions. Amtrak's slogan: "The U.S.A.: See it our way" took on a new meaning.

"Altamaha River" also seemed to be warming up. Back in "Silver Horizon" where passengers were already gathering, the dome section was uninhabitable and the rest of the car very hot. Thankfully, those two business cars had been dropped during the night. At Sanderson (reached one hour late) it transpired that two young men sitting in "Silver Horizon" were in fact railway employees and that one was now going to fix "Altamaha River." Encouraged by passengers and officials, he disappeared beneath the car, only to emerge moments later with some vital part of the car's anatomy in his hand and the news that the air conditioning had now failed totally.

West of Sanderson, camaraderie had built up among the passengers in the lower level of "Silver Horizon." The rear door was jammed open with three Amtrak coat hangars and a large chisel. A man from Oklahoma appeared with an ice box and an immense supply of beer, and the car's bar obligingly yielded ice which had presumably been placed on board for the non-existent attendant and his non-existent supplies. The trainman instructed us in hotbox and drag detectors, and as we passed over these a female passenger, aided by the trainman, radioed the result to the engineer, who replied suitably.

By mid-morning the electrician returned with "good" news: passengers in "Altamaha River" would be flown to their final destinations (in my case San Francisco) from El Paso. This alternative did not appeal to me, and I sought the conductor. A trainman regretted that that gentleman was "busy" and secreted somewhere in the bowels of the hi-level cars. I could stay on the train, would be re-accommodated and would receive a partial fare refund.



At El Paso we bade farewell to our flying colleagues. The new trainman said "Gee, I don't believe I came to work today" and disappeared into one of "Silver Horizon's" bedrooms. The heat now became intense and passengers retired to their accommodations while I contented myself with a vestibule door.

In the early evening some remarkable news filtered to the back of the train: the air conditioning in the diner was working (intermittently) and dinner could be enjoyed. As dusk fell, a man entered the rear section of "Silver Horizon" to close the door, as he had fixed the air conditioning there too. For this he received a well-earned round of applause.

For me, my accommodation problem remained. Two other passengers had stayed in "Altamaha River" west of El Paso mainly because each received only two minutes' notice to quit the train. The conductor joining at El Paso re-accommodated each of these and opened "Silver Horizon." I was told that the conductor who boarded at Tucson would deal with me. Unfortunately this gentleman was not the regular man and seemed to be along for the ride. West of Phoenix he eventually decided that I must stay in "Altamaha River" but could transfer to a bedroom. I was promised a complete fare refund.

As I settled down in this unfortunate car for a second night, it was now clear that some part of its undercarriage was dragging along the rails, causing both noise and jolts. Quite soon the electrician could be heard instructing the conductor to stop the train and cut out the car.

As we ground to a halt, a knock revealed my elusive porter, now reassigned to "Silver Horizon." Would I please step forward to roomette one in "Pacific Ocean" where alternative accommodations awaited? He regretted the way in which I had been treated and, ambiguously, the "politics" which had surrounded re-accommodating me. Then the conductor was on hand again, promising to slide a form under my door for a partial fare refund. This was not done.

A final indignity of the SUNSET was that first class passengers had to rise at 6:30am so beds could be made up, well before arrival in L.A. The porter in "Pacific Ocean" was not pleased to see me, and it was fortunate that my original porter came forward from "Silver Horizon" to make my bed. At breakfast a waiter was heard to say "Man, it sho' is good to see that city!" and many passengers agreed.

Stepping directly from the SUNSET LIMITED to the COAST STARLIGHT was akin to entering another world. A huge crowd boarded at L.A., but all were accommodated on the long train. A walk thru the coaches

brought me to the full-length dome, a most impressive car in which I spent most of the day. Regrettably, some of the windows were fogged and on one the outside glass was broken. Before departure an Amtrak official apologized for the latter.

As we moved easily thru hill and coastal landscapes, a coach attendant distributed postcards in the dome and then proceeded to arm himself with a tray and to serve drinks at our seats.

Exciting scenery and pleasant company meant that lunch was foregone. In the evening, the welcome in a crowded dining car was sullen, but food and service were excellent. Back in the dome as dusk fell, the attendant thanked us for using Amtrak and gave advice concerning the bus connection to San Francisco and about hotels. Arrival in Oakland was 30 minutes down, but passengers were not upset, as the reason for this--a fire at a trackside factory south of San Jose--was relayed by the attendant.

Three days later I renewed my acquaintance with the STARLIGHT for the trip north to Seattle. Matters were not proceeding smoothly. The southbound STARLIGHT was 13 hours late due to a freight derailment in Oregon, and was to be annulled at Oakland, with the luckless passengers either being bused south or staying in local hotels. The westbound SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR was 5 hours behind, and finally the northbound STARLIGHT was on time.

All three trains were expected to converge on Oakland at once. The southbound train arrived first, but a booming P.A. voice forbade the attendants to open their doors. Then the ZEPHYR pulled in to set down a surprisingly small number of passengers. When it retreated, the occupants of the STARLIGHT were released, and buzzed like angry altho rather tired bees across the tracks and into the station to line up before four harassed clerks. It seemed unfortunate that no general announcement was made to calm or reassure these people, altho the situation was somewhat eased by a single coach attendant who, while he must have been tired himself, came into the station and circulated among the crowd, speaking sympathetically to all concerned.

During this drama the northbound train pulled in and I fled to roomette six in car 2712 "Pine Brook," the very last car in a consist which to my chagrin did not include the advertised dome lounge. The welcome from the porter was cordial, but the conductor had double-booking problems and moved me first to roomette five and then to roomette four. The porter was right back to make the bed, to apologize for the plastic mattress and to ask about my trip so far. He seemed so embarrassed about the INTER-AMERICAN sleeper saga that I did not elaborate on the SUNSET.

Next morning I raised the shade to view Oregon's famous scenery only to discover a completely opaque window. This scandalous situation brought another shower of apologies from my porter and caused a premature withdrawal from my accommodations.

Breakfast in the diner produced my only inedible Amtrak meal (runny eggs, cold coffee and leather masquerading as French toast), so lunch was taken in the lounge counter car. A plastic spoon was presented with a turkey sandwich and gravy together with the explanation that "they gave 3000 spoons but no knives or forks; that's how this thing is run."

Travel by coach for the remainder of the day was restful, but underlined the extent to which the dome lounge adds to this train. Final arrival in Seattle was 45 minutes down, caused entirely by sluggish running north of Portland.

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Back in "Silver Dale" as we departed there was a problem: the heating was full on and nobody could turn it off. I began to envisage the offer of another airplane ride, but fortunately the matter was rectified and the car rendered habitable at Pasco.

While it was not perfect, the train was the best one on which I rode. How relaxing it was to wander between dome, lounge, diner and roomette as the train moved along steadily! How impressive it was that the windows were washed at Havre and that the schedule was maintained throughout! Just west of Spokane the conductor remarked to a trainman that we were 30 seconds (!) late and that no time must be wasted on the entry movement to the station.

Throughout my trip on this train, Amtrak staff (with the exception of my sleeping car porter, who did not even bother to make up my bed for the second night) were adequate, while non-Amtrak staff were excellent. On a number of occasions a conductor or trainman passed thru the dome lounge bidding passengers compliments of the day, answering questions and even finding a moment to talk to children.

Our run was not without incident. Just before entering North Dakota on Sunday it was learned that the state was dry, and a number of passengers stocked up with beer. This did not meet with the approval of the conductor boarding at Williston, who announced that the lounge was now open to buy back beer, and that he would throw out of the train anyone caught consuming alcohol.

I was sorry to detrain from the EMPIRE BUILDER. This run, following two reasonably pleasant sojourns on the COAST STARLIGHT, had raised my opinion of Amtrak's long-distance services, and I was hopeful that the trend would continue aboard my next train, the FLORIDIAN.

From the outset, the FLORIDIAN appeared to be one of Amtrak's least favored children. The de-sleepered, Amfleeted INTER-AMERICAN was already gobbling up a goodly number of passengers when a shirted Amtrak employee pointing into the darkness advised thirty or so passengers that our train (Oh, no--there's no dome!) was "up there on the right."

Awaiting our company was engine 232 (a newly-rebuilt F40PHR), and cars 1913, 5674, 3811, 6011, 5467, 2690, 1519, and SP 6713. I was placed in 6011, a high-density coach without foot- or legrests. Protest brought a transfer to join five fellow travelers in 5674, which sported scuffed lumpy seats, fogged windows, but to compensate, footrests.

Shortly after departure I repaired to the lounge car. Here, air conditioning was out already and the unfortunate attendant was removing his coat, loosening his shirt collar, and had opened a trap door in the side of the car to admit air.

Depressing the flush pedal in a toilet produced clouds of steam, while the taps supplied cold water only! Back in car 5674, as we headed for deepest Indiana, taking 35 minutes to get from one side of Lafayette to the other in the process, the air conditioning was failing and a move to 5467 was called for. By late afternoon, that car was in trouble too, and so it was vestibule viewing time again,

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culminating in an exciting ride thru the streets of New Albany with children on bicycles racing the train (and winning).

South of Louisville I resolved to upgrade to roomette after the apparently sole occupant of 2690 declared the car to be cool. A humorous electrician who joined us at Louisville announced that 2690 was the one car which would not fail, as he was residing in it. Unfortunately, this promise proved false, as 2690 was showing signs of heating up as I left it to revert to coach at Dothan next morning.

Altho the FLORIDIAN seemed like a rolling junkyard to nowhere, it did have its positive points. The train clipped along at a good speed, altho the schedule was not maintained as running repairs necessitated long station stops. Patronage rose steadily, especially on the second day. The main saving grace was the crew, except for the sleeping car porter. The coach attendants chatted with the passengers, many of whom detrained at each station stop, and for the first time my luggage was carried for me as I left the train. The dining car crew, including the lounge attendant, was the best I encountered on my entire trip.

Down thru the train, notices listed options concerning this unfortunate train's future. Somebody had thoughtfully circled number 3: reroute thru Chattanooga, Macon, Savannah, but the conductor was heard to tell a passenger that the railroads would stand in the way of that. Using this train's present performance as the benchmark against which to evaluate the future of rail passenger service on this route appears highly questionable.

The FLORIDIAN deposited me at a station called Jacksonville, which did not seem to correspond to the city of that name. After 2 1/2 hours, I was climbing aboard the northbound SILVER METEOR--destination Savannah, where I would catch the New York-bound PALMETTO next morning. This was the only train on which specific coach seats were assigned, but as I boarded my car the attendant said "If it is too hot in there, leave your bags and sit elsewhere." It certainly was too hot, and so a retreat was called for first to the lounge car (dirty with a poor attendant absent for a long period), then to the diner (very good), then thru the train (air conditioning problems in the sleeper section and lights temporarily out in one of the coaches) and finally back to my assigned space, which was now occupied by another passenger.

Meanwhile another difficulty had arisen. An Amtrak official advised

that I travel further north to Charleston, where the station was more conveniently located. The conductor agreed that I could do this, but then requested full payment for the Savannah-to-Charleston segment, as he had no way of issuing tickets to railpass holders. However, a delay to the train enabled me to dash to the station to obtain the necessary piece of paper. Surely it would be possible for Amtrak to make good this deficiency.

My general impression of the SILVER METEOR, admittedly based on a brief acquaintance, was that it seemed rather tired both in looks and performance, and certainly fell short of Amtrak's Western trains.

My very last rail journey marked a return to Amfleet in the guise of the PALMETTO which called at Charleston the next morning to double its passenger load to 50 and to take on a large tour group as well. After thousands of miles in conventional equipment, I still liked the long-distance Amcoaches.

This train certainly did good business at all its stops, with over 150 on board north of Richmond, and I was astonished to read a notice proclaiming forthcoming service reductions.

The Amdinettes did not deal with the large crowd in an entirely satisfactory manner. Early on, card players and drinkers settled in the face-to-face seating area, which meant that luncheon patrons had to carry their food back to their coaches. Nor did the cars offer the pleasant informal atmosphere of the conventional lounges.

Evaluating my trip as a whole, I tried not to compare Amtrak with other systems or with earlier times, but to judge it against its own promises as stated in its literature.

I regret that my major criticism is that all too often the service falls short of what is advertised, and without apology or explanation. I chose trains with domes to see the countryside, yet on two occasions these were missing for no apparent reason. Only two trains I rode kept to schedule, yet on only one occasion (on the RILEY) was an apology offered. Quite often, sustained enquiry revealed perfectly logical reasons for some shortcoming and I could not see why Amtrak would not convey these to the customer.

I was generally impressed with both Amtrak and non-Amtrak staff. I encountered only one outwardly rude employee, while many went out of their way to be helpful. Amtrak onboard personnel were rated the lowest. I was amazed by the number of persons required to enable an American train to move at all: Trainmen, Attendants, Porters, not to mention a Fireman. Sleeping car porters were the least satisfactory employees I encountered, followed by coach attendants. In defense of Amtrak employees, I must say that they deal with a public which at times treats them very badly.

One distressing point is the seeming low regard which train staff have for Amtrak administrators. One of the most courteous conductors I met suggested that some senior Amtrak officials do not know the front of a train from the back, while a very good lounge car attendant felt that Amtrak prefers to discard employees who have worked on trains in the pre-Amtrak era. The most highly motivated Amtrak employee I met said that while he enjoyed working for the company, he would probably have to leave because politics rather than ability or experience is the main factor controlling entry to the type of administrative position he would ultimately prefer. I do not know whether these sentiments reflect the truth. They certainly suggest the existence of a most unfortunate gap between Amtrak management and staff, a gap which a number of apparently senior Amtrak officials noted riding trains made no attempt to bridge.

Except for reservations about Amdinettes on long-distance trains, I liked the design of Amtrak's vehicles, especially the full-length domes, the long-distance Amcoaches, and the roomettes. I was less impressed with maintenance standards, and would have thought that after 6 years air conditioning and mechanical failures should be minimal. I was disgusted with the fogged windows, especially in domes and sleeper accommodations for which I had paid extra fare, and believe that Amtrak is being less than honest when it implies in advertising that one will see more of the U.S.A. if one travels by train. I enjoyed trains with low-level coaches and domes most, and felt that hi-level equipment might actually take from the considerable character of some services.

Amtrak's food was reasonable in both quality and price, but I would have appreciated a little more variety especially in the cheaper dishes, where turkey sandwiches and hamburgers became tiresome.

Stations were generally clean and pleasant. A most useful service would be maps that enable arriving passengers to ascertain their precise location.

My voyage across America's rails produced both good and bad experiences. While the good predominated, there were too many of the latter. I now wonder whether my trip gave a fair reflection of Amtrak operations. But in any case, for my complete experience I say sincerely, Thank you Amtrak and thank you America.

FUEL EFFICIENCY - AMFLEET

DIESEL LOCOMOTIVE	CARS[1]	REVENUE SEATS	GALLONS PER SEAT-MILE	GALLONS PER[2] SEAT-HOUR	BTU PER SEAT-MILE	BTU PER[2] SEAT-HOUR	LOCOMOTIVE IDLE GALLONS/HOUR (Summer Only)
E-8 (Steam Gen.)	12	960	.0026	.068	351	9180	5.0
SDP40F (Steam Gen.)	17	1356	.0021	.048	284	6480	5.5
P30CH	15	1188	.0024	.051	324	6885	5.0
F40PH	11	876	.0024	.063	324	8505	4.3
LRC (5-car train)[3]	5	385	.0030	.053	405	7155	5.0
LRC (Maximum number[4] of cars)	12	938	.0021	.061	284	8235	5.0
TURBINE LOCOMOTIVE RTG (5-car train)[3]	5	263	.0083	.112	1121	15120	-0-
RTG (Maximum number[4] of cars)	12	727	.0060	.081	810	10935	-0-
ELECTRIC LOCOMOTIVE[5]			EQUIVALENT GALLONS PER SEAT-MILE	EQUIVALENT GALLONS PER SEAT-HOUR			
GG-1 (Steam Gen.)	18	1440	.0021	.032	279	4320	-0-
E60CP	18	1440	.0024	.048	326	6480	-0-
Metroliner	6	440	.0027 (NEC estimate)	.055	365	7425	-0-

FUEL EFFICIENCY - BI-LEVEL

DIESEL LOCOMOTIVE	CARS	REVENUE SEATS	GALLONS PER SEAT-MILE	GALLONS PER[2] SEAT-HOUR	BTU-PER SEAT-MILE	BTU PER[2] SEAT-HOUR	LOCOMOTIVE IDLE GALLONS/HOUR (SUMMER ONLY)
P30CH	12[6]	705	.0034	.068	460	9207	5.0
F40PH	10[7]	550	.0039	.098	522	13214	4.3
P30CH	12[8] coaches	930	.0026	.052	351	7020	5.0
F40PH	10[9] coaches	775	.0027	.069	365	9315	4.3

NOTES:

(1) Mix of cars - 1 Amcafe : 4 Amcoach
(2) Fuel used during station stops
(3) LRC and RTG were designed as 5-car trains to meet maximum speed specifications.
(4) Number of cars determined by locomotive or head end power capacity
(5) Energy from catenary adjusted for thermal efficiency and electric transmission losses (29% efficiency). Source: International Railway Gazette, G. Mitchell, "Design to Achieve Conservation of Resources," 12/1976.
(6) 3 high density coach : 5 low density coach : 2 sleeper : 1 diner : 1 lounge car
(7) 2 high density coach ; 4 low density coach : 2 sleeper : 1 diner : 1 lounge car

On long distance trains, travelling overnight, ICC regulations require the provision of a dining car, lounge space, sleeping accommodations, and checked baggage space, all of which reduce the Revenue Seating Capacity of these trains and adversely affect the fuel efficiency per revenue seat.

(8) 6 high density coaches; 6 low density coaches
(9) 5 high density coaches; 5 low density coaches

The above table of fuel efficiency calculations was released in late August by Amtrak, and was prepared by Amtrak's Equipment Engineering Department. The maximum number of cars indicated in any combination with a given locomotive type is determined by the number of cars that locomotive can pull at 80mph. Fuel efficiency in the Gallons/Seat-Mile column is calculated at a steady 80mph speed.

Mixed Train of Thoughts

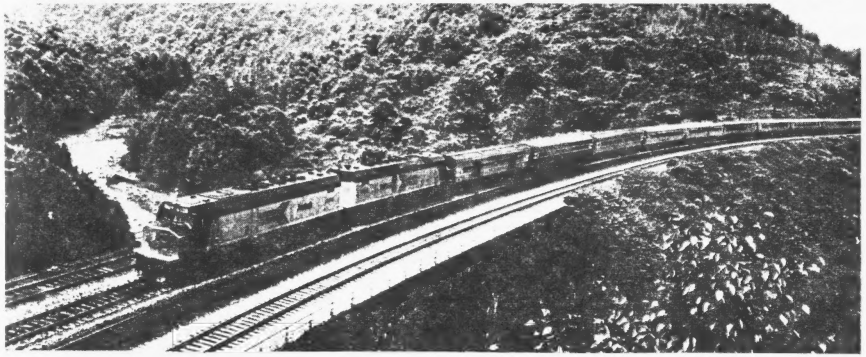
MAJOR SCHEDULE CHANGES are coming on Amtrak on Oct 30, the fall return to Standard Time. One of the most drastic changes is in trains 7&8 (EMPIRE BUILDER) and 17&18 (NORTH COAST HIAWATHA). These will now leave Seattle in the morning earlier than at present; train 8 will lv at 7:30am and train 18 will lv at 8am, with each arriving Chicago at 9:05am (having the same schedule between Minneapolis and Chicago). Each will lv Chicago at 10:05pm and arrive Seattle at 7:05 (train 17) or 7:35pm (train 7). At present each lvs Chicago at 1:40pm. Since the EMPIRE BUILDER is running quad-weekly and the HIAWATHA tri-weekly, what Amtrak has essentially done since Sept 8 is make one train out of two, as only one is running on any given day. To try to clear up confusion we may have generated before: there are still two trains daily between Chicago & Minneapolis, even tho there is only one Chicago-Seattle train. The second train is called the TWIN CITIES HIAWATHA and began running Sep 8 with conventional equipment. It was scheduled to be Amfleeted about Oct 3. It has been running on the NORTH COAST's former schedule and carrying diner or Traveller's Rest car, one or two dome coaches, one or two standard coaches, mail, etc. Effective Oct 30, when the Seattle-Chicago service begins its evening departures from Chicago, the TWIN CITIES HI will reportedly lv Chicago at 11:40am, arriving Minneapolis 8:40pm; lv Minneapolis 7am, ar Chicago 4:41pm. At the same time, one Turboliner set will be cut from the Chicago-Milwaukee route, and the remaining trains renumbered in the 330-series. Milwaukee departures are to be 6:55am (#330), 7:43am (#8 or 18), 11:45am (332), 3:11pm (#10-TWIN CITIES HI), and 7:20pm (334). Chicago departures will be 8:05am (331), 11:40am (#9), 4:30pm (333), 6:45pm (335), and 10:40 pm (#7 or 17).....

* * *

OTHER SCHEDULE CHANGES for Oct 30 include cutting a half-hour of padding out of the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR's schedule west of Ogden, speeding up the SUNSET LTD by 15 minutes, and running the PIONEER 15 minutes earlier out of Seattle for a better Ogden connection. There will be internal adjustments on the COAST STARLIGHT schedule, with Albany OR and Richmond CA added as stops. Richmond will also be added to the stops made by the SF ZEPHYR and the SAN JOAQUIN, and the latter will also begin serving Madera CA. It is also believed but unconfirmed by Amtrak that Suisun-Fairfield and Davis will become stops for all trains passing thru them (STARLIGHT & SF ZEPHYR). The Amtrak-CalTrans bus connection from Sacramento to the SAN JOAQUIN at Stockton, with a stop at Lodi, will begin opertion Oct 31--full trip fare will be $4. To correct an earlier note here, trains 795 and 798 (shown on railroad timetables) are actually the PIONEER, which Amtrak numbers 25 & 26 on public timetables for simplicity.....

THE EMPIRE SERVICE will have major changes Oct 30, with a run added between Albany & Buffalo, lv Albany in the morning and lv Buffalo in the evening, weekdays only. The BROADWAY LIMITED will get a big rescheduling: it will lv NY after 6pm (instead of 2:30pm) and reach Chicago shortly after noon (instead of early morning). Eastbound it will lv Chicago about 3:30pm and reach NY shortly after noon (instead of after 4pm). The JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY, renamed the CARDINAL, is expected to get sleeping car service again on Oct 30. The COLONIAL will begin serving Lee Hall, VA on Oct 30 with northbd stops at 6:40am Mon-Sat and 8:40am on Sundays, and southbd a stop daily at 9:25pm. The station will be unmanned. When the CHAMPION was dropped Sep 8, Palatka FL became a flag stop for the SILVER STAR (only the CHAMPION had stopped there), opening up N.E. Florida to both Florida coasts. The STAR also began stopping at Camden SC and Southern Pines NC northbound (also served only by the CHAMPION). Starting Oct 30, the SILVER METEOR will become #87-88 north of Jacksonville; two sections south of Jacksonville 87-88 via Orlando to St. Pete; and 83-84 via Ocala to Miami. It

will run on the METEOR schedule via Florence. Actually this is the same as done previously, when CHAMPION & METEOR were combined north of Jacksonville, except that the name CHAMPION has been dropped. 87-88 will also stop at Palatka on flag (11:25am SB, 3:41pm NB), in addition to 81-81, giving Palatka two trains daily. The FLORIDIAN schedule is expected to remain day-night-day Oct 30, with a lengthened schedule; Miami times are 7am NB and 11:40pm SB (NARP and Florida DOT are said to be vigorously protesting this, and want a flip to night-day-night)..... THE NATIONAL LIMITED will be re-routed starting Oct 30 over a more



The NATIONAL LIMITED. Amtrak photo.

northerly line between Columbus and Indianapolis via Piqua, Ohio and Muncie, Indiana (westbd effective Oct 31). The temporary re-routing means that Dayton will lose all rail passenger service. Richmond IN will continue to be served by the CARDINAL (RILEY). Amtrak officials in a Sep 30 report said that no decision had been made about possible stops on the northern line, altho Amtrak is developing cost estimates for construction of temporary platforms at Piqua, about 30 mis north of Dayton, and at Muncie. The re-routing is forced by Conrail's notice of discontinuance Nov 1 on a 22.6-mile segment of track between Cambridge City and Charlottesville IN, and elimination of the signalling system and speed reductions on the remaining segments between Dayton and Indianapolis. The track segment was not included in PC trackage taken over by Conrail in 1976 and is still owned by the trustees of the bankrupt Penn Central. Conrail pays the PC trustees a fee for using thetrack, and has told Amtrak that it would have to assume both the fee and an estimated annual maintenance cost of over $900,000 for the Dayton-Indianapolis portion. Amtrak says it can't afford these costs. Amtrak hopes eventually to run the NATIONAL from Columbusto Indianapolis via Dayton and Cincinnati. That track is included in the USRA's Final System Plan for Conrail, but is in poor condition, and Conrail does not consider it a top priority for upgrading. Preliminary Oct 30 schedules show the NATIONAL leaving NY at 4:55pm and reaching Kansas City at 9:50pm, with no apparent change in the eastbound schedule.....

THE SOUTHBOUND ADIRONDACK is expected to leave Montreal at 10am, an hour and 45mins later than now, with no northbound change. It is expected that the MONTREALER will not be Amfleeted before February. Northeast Corridor schedules for Oct 30 show the trains discontinued that Amtrak earlier indicated would be for budgetary reasons (see list in last issue). The VALLEY FORGE, trains 42-43, reportedly will be dropped Oct 30 and replaced by a Silverliner train leaving Harrisburg 5:50am, arriving NY 9:35am; leaving NY 5:10pm, with Harrisburg time unknown..... THE RESCHEDULING OF the Seattle-Chicago trains will apparently permit connections at Chicago from the LAKE SHORE, CARDINAL, SOUTHWEST LTD, SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR, LONE STAR, and pANAMA LTD to Seattle, while eastbound connections to the SOUTHWEST LTD, SF ZEPHYR, LONE STAR, LAKE SHORE, BROADWAY, CARDINAL, and PANAMA.....

AMTRAK'S 5-YEAR PLAN has not yet been seen by us. We hope to have a fuller report on it next issue. However, the Wall Street Journal mentioned some items of interest from it, including the fact that Amtrak wants to set up a "mothball fleet" of about 200 cars and 30 engines available for a "sudden and unanticipated surge" of passengers, as during the 1974 energy crisis. This assumes that Congress gives Amtrak money to buy new car for Eastern, Midwestern, and Southern routes. Would these cars be equipped for headend power--i.e., electrified? We don't know yet, but will find out later. Many rail supporters would be happy to see good older cars retained and electrified, including especially the well-liked domes. (A reader sends a list of 56 cars in storage at Los Angeles as of Sep 30, apparently unserviceable and awaiting sale as scrap. The list includes four dome cars--9351, 9381, 9383, and 9541. There are three sleepers on the list (2366, 2796 and 2814) and 8 diners; three observation-lounge cars (3341, 3345, and 3802) and one lounge (3821), while the rest are coaches, most high-density.) The plan states that Amtrak will emphasize corridors more and drop some high-deficit trains. An erroneous report in the San Francisco Chronicle (Oct 11) said that Amtrak will study high-speed service between Northern and Southern California. An Amtrak spokesman said that the article was referring to mention in the 5-year plan of expanding the Los Angeles-Bay Area "corridor" with no reference to high-speed operation.....

* * *

AMTRAK'S FINANCIAL PROBLEMS are putting the corporation into its most difficult trough since perhaps the summer of 1972. Readers know the reasons for the present problems--the SDP40F engine debacle last winter, the breakdowns due to bad winter weather, the breakdown of service and connections due to these with resulting loss of ridership surge (July systemwide ridership was only 1.8% higher than July 1976, even tho Americans traveled more this summer than in the summer of 1976--see NY Times, Sep 25), the Administration's cutback on funding, Congress's further cutback on funding, Amtrak's demoralizing reaction in cutting back service, etc. The National Association of RR Passengers in its latest newsletter editorializes that Amtrak is attacking the wrong problem--trying to cut services to live within the Administration-imposed budget instead of drumming up more money. Says NARP: "Making, implementing, defending, and reversing cutback decisions are absorbing management energies, destroying the morale of those staff members who are not laid off, and making Amtrak look ridiculous in the eyes of the public." Amtrak's actions are "pure disaster" according to NARP. NARP criticizes Amtrak for minimizing in testimony to Congress last March the possible effects of the Administration's planned low budget. Last winter and spring Amtrak officials and supporters were generally euphoric over the advent of Brock Adams to the DOT, believing that a rail supporter who could be relied upon was now in power. Since then, the Administration has demonstrated that its operations are no different, perhaps even worse, than the previous anti-rail Administration. NARP told Brock Adams on Sep 21 that "if the federal government forces Amtrak to carry out drastic cutbacks in service because of insufficient funding, nationwide rail passenger service in the U.S. will be well on its way to extinction." "If the Administration holds to its inflexible support level ($500 million) for Amtrak for the next three years, forcing new cutbacks each year, nothing will be left but a few corridor services." NARP told the DOT Secretary that "Stated bluntly, it is irresponsible to fund the basic foundation for a nationwide rail passenger system, incur all those fixed costs, and then refuse to pay for operation of a meaningful level of service." Some railfans who write us are in the depths of despair about Amtrak's present situation, seeing the dismantling of the system coming. They are hostile about continued poor service on many trains (note also what Mr. Killen encountered in the article in this issue), and so are some legislators. "With all the

money we are spending, when is this going to turn around? When are we going to see improvement?" asked Senator Birch Bayh of Indiana at hearings for Amtrak's supplemental request. Amtrak would have a stronger case to make before Congress if its operations were in better shape. Some observers are calling for Paul Reistrup to fire the people at Amtrak who are "pulling him down" before it's too late. But our biggest disappointment is with the Carter Administration and its obsession for balancing the budget before 1981, even if it destroys the country in the process. There doesn't seem to be any real difference from the Ford-Coleman days.....

AN AMTRAK PROBLEM that isn't generally known is that about 3 years ago, back in the Roger Lewis days, operations people at Amtrak decided to put diesel engines on a 3-year maintenance cycle. Railroads generally use no more than a 2-year cycle. So this year many Amtrak engines are needing rebuilding and are breaking down just at a time when equipment and money are short.....

THE FLORIDIAN HEARINGS are in progress, having begun Oct 11 in Miami. Next ones are Oct 17 in Atlanta, 18th in Montgomery, 19th in Birmingham, 20th in Chattanooga, 24th in Nashville, 25th in Louisville, 26th in Indianapolis, and 27th in Chicago (at Watertower Hyatt).....

THE OVERNIGHT TRAIN between San Diego and Sacramento is expected to start up before the end of 1977, according to Amtrak. Meanwhile, the new Richmond CA Amtrak-BART transfer station will be formally dedicated at 9am Oct 28, and Gov. Brown may be on hand, along with San Francisco's mayor, to ride the SAN JOAQUIN which will stop there just for that occasion (regular stops begin Oct 30; there is no weekend BART service). Programs will also be held at Stockton and Madera the 28th, publicizing the addition of service (bus from Sacramento to Stockton) coming up. Meanwhile, CalTrans said that it is lookinginto the possibility of an Amtrak station at the BART Coliseum station in Oakland, and at one in the San Fernando Valley, perhaps near the Hollywood-Burbank Airport..... A MIXED TRAIN to L.A. on Amtrak? CalTrans officials are considering the possibility of suggesting to SP that the coming overnight service (see above) be a mixed train, in order to sweeten the idea for the railroad. SP at one time operated regularly scheduled freights L.A.-Bay Area on the Coast Route, and maybeit could re-introduce them with some passenger cars added..... AMTRAK'S BOARD MEETING of Sep 28 included an agreement to begin overhauling and modifying the Metroliners, and to buy 8 lightweight electric locomotives, specifications for which will be developed. A contract for the locos will be awarded soon, Amtrak said. The Board also approved modifying 32 more SDP40F diesels into 4-axle units, at a cost of $12.5 million. Forty baggage cars will be modified for use with bi-level cars, at a cost of $1.6 million. The cars will have different diaphragms, generators, bearings, power trainline and heater units, and will be rebuilt at Rail Systems Inc. in California. The Board also committed $15 million more to a planned $40.6 million modernization program for the Chicago yards..... THE NEXT WINTER will be as bad as the last, according to predictions of the Old Farmers Almanac and according to rural observers who see telltale signs in animal fur, etc.....

WHAT CAN INDIVIDUALS do now to help Amtrak's funding problem? Write to your Congressman (Address: House Office Building, Washington DC 20515). On the NATIONAL LTD re-routing problem, NARP urges us to write Sen. Russell Long and Sen. Birch Bayh, key subcommittee chairmen, with copies to your own Senators. Senators' addresses are: Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20610.....

Mailing date this issue: October 13, 1977.

AN AMTRAK RAILPASS ad in Chicago papers Sep 6 listed the station address of the Milwaukee station. About the same time, a similar ad in Minneapolis papers gave the address of the St. Paul City Ticket Office which had been closed July 15. BART has just had 600,000 color schedules printed at a cost of $18,000, and found the map of San Francisco Bay inverted on the cover. No on is perfect. RTN's long-delayed yearbook will be published soon, and an announcement will be made in these pages.....

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"Toronto is still largely in the grip of the automobile psychology of the mid-1950s, ready to defend collectively the individual's unfettered right to come downtown every day with his two-ton toy. This is what the arithmetic of car ownership versus transit fares is up against: dedication to the myth of comfort and convenience, and some curious need for physical separation from our fellow citizens."

--Toronto Globe & Mail editorial, September 17

SLIP OF THE MONTH CLUB***

"...one of the (GG-1) locomotives...had been restored, with the approval of Amtrak, to its original Loewy livery--glittery black, with long stripings of glittery gold which made it seem perpetually in motion."

--The New Yorker, September 26

(The New Yorker is human! The magazine is fallible! RTN is no longer Brunswick green with typographic envy.)

RAIL FANTRIPS

Nov 12-Dec 3: 22-day Mexico tour, starts from El Paso; private cars, U.S. food & drink. $1155.00 & up. Great Western Tours, 639 Market St, San Francisco CA.

Oct 24-31: "Nostalgic Orient Express" recreation of famous run Istanbul-Zurich. $935 each, double. Also spring and autumn trips 1978. Raymond & Whitcomb Co., 400 Madison Ave, New York 10017. (212) 759-3960. Excludes air fare.

Feb 25, 1978: 50th Anniversary of Moffat Tunnel; RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR trip, time capsule opening, 1-day RPO, special menus, party, etc. SSAE for info: Intermountain Chap, NRHS, Att'n: R. Brown, Box 5181, Terminal Annex, Denver 80217.

May 14, 1978: Trans-Siberian Rwy incl. in 35-day round-the-world tour. Info: Great Western Tours, 639 Market St, 9th Floor, San Francisco CA 94105.

One special Fantrips listing is free, subject to our editing. Send full info to Rail Travel News, Fantrips Dept, PO Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

Express Ads

THE TRAVEL AGENT FOR RAILFANS: I've just returned from a nine-day rail tour of Switzerland, where I saw steam, electric, cog, narrow gauge, plus streetcars, aerial tramways, and funiculars! May I help you plan your vacation? European rail, Amtrak, and airline tickets. Call or write: Ted Blishak, Accent on Travel, 1030 Curtis St, Menlo Park, CA 94025. (415) 326-7330.

ARIZONA, NEW MEXICO, WEST TEXAS RAILFANS - Join us in the fight to save our passenger service. For info, write: Rail Passenger Ass'n of the Southwest, Dept. RTN, P.O. Box 32041, Phoenix, AZ 85064.

RTN ADVERTISING RATES: Express Ads $1.00 per line of 80 spaces. Display ads (camera-ready) $25 per half-page (maximum size--4x5 inches); smaller sizes are priced proportionately. MESSAGE MEDIA, Box 9007, Berkeley, California 94709.

ONE QUICK CALL DOES IT ALL--Amtrak or airline reservations and tickets, hotels, car rentals, tours, cruises! Call GREAT WESTERN TOURS at (415) 398-2994, or write us at 639 Market Street, Ninth Floor, San Francisco 94105.

DINING CAR DISHES, glasses, silver, cloth. Timetables, guides, Pullman, stationery, rules, metal items from 25 railroads. Long stamped envelope for list. J. McClellan, 1752 S. Wichita, Wichita, Kan. 67213. (Will buy large and small railroad collections.)

Employee Timetables, Pullman Diagrams, Railroadiana. Send SSAE. 20th Century Hobbies Ltd., 1034 College Avenue, Wheaton IL 60187.

GOING EURAIL? Take a worldwide THOMAS COOK INTERNATIONAL TIMETABLE, $7.50 bulk mail ($9.50 air) from Thomas Cook Ltd, P.O. Box 36, Peterborough, England.

YOU'RE INVITED--MEXICO RAILFAN FUN-TRAIN--JAN 20 to Feb 5, 1978--Trip of Thousand Wonders, Mexico City, Merida (narrow gauge), Cancun, Uxmal, Metro, street cars, locomotive ride. Trip starts in Oklahoma (join anywhere). MIDWEST TRAVEL SERVICE, 2936R Bella Vista, Midwest City, OK 73110--Phone 405-732-0566.

Don't be in the dark, subscribe to the LARK. A monthly newsletter about what to do and where to find it, a must for all railfans. Be in the know. Get free copy by mentioning RTN & enclosing stamp. Mail subscriptions to Ron Hook, 869 Rosemount Rd, Oakland CA 94610. Subscriptions $3.00 for 12 issues first class.

TIMETABLES - AMTRAK "The first six years" - Compendium of over 500 timetables issued during this period. Those available for sale and prices shown. Send 50¢ and SSAE. Refundable with purchase. CARL LOUCKS, 199 Wayland, Hamden CT 06518.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA RAILROADIANA FAIRE, all types of memorabilia, Saturday, November 12, 1977 9am to 4:30pm, Holiday Inn North, US 160 1900 Canterbury Rd, Sacramento. Admission is $1.00. The sponsor is NAOTC.

The public transit catalyst, expediting the improvement of low-cost rail transit, is acutely aware of the 1984 Los Angeles Summer OLYMPICS. The gamut of public leaderships should be acutely aware of the public transit catalyst, Robert J. Swan, Box 1866, Long Beach CA 90801.

Overtures by the public transit catalyst have received the courteous, personal but pro forma non-acceptance of recent New York MTA management. I say it is prudent that the present management pay my nominal expenses to come to New York to explore whether a possibility of low-cost rail transit, as conceived by me on an earlier visit, remains feasible for a sooner and more practical implementation to JFK AIRPORT. Conventional approaches continually founder and the costly inconvenience of the status quo continues. Expediting the improvement of low-cost rail transit, I am Robert J. Swan, Box 1866, Long Beach CA 90801.

Jack Gilstrap of the Los Angeles RTD violated his Board's resolution 75-412 to keep open the Long Beach RTD Station in the Consolidated Bus Depot in the Breakers Hotel. State and federal subsidies became the rationale for bankrupting the private station agent of exemplary public service from the RED CAR days, Mr. and Mrs. Willard Doll. Fares were lowered, passengers increased and the Dolls worked harder, while their commission take plunged. Disobeying his Board, a viable proposal was not made to the Dolls, and Gilstrap never reported back to his Board in open session by placing the matter on their agenda. An oral Board promise to myself at their 6-2-76 meeting to place the matter on their next agenda was similarly not carried out. The matter remains an OBSCENITY--to private enterprise, to the Dolls' reputation, to the transit riding public including trains and planes also serviced, and to the good intent of the public subsidies. It is this same unfairness to private enterprise that made predecessor LA MTA unfair proposals regarding upgrading the Los Angeles-Long Beach rail line unacceptable in 1961.
Robert J. Swan, public transit catalyst, Box 1866, Long Beach CA 90801.

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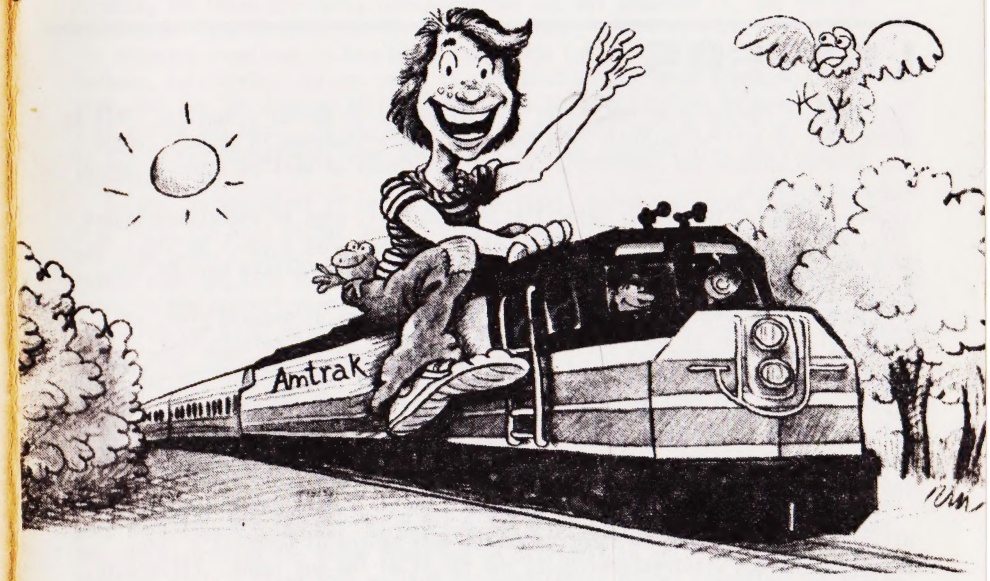
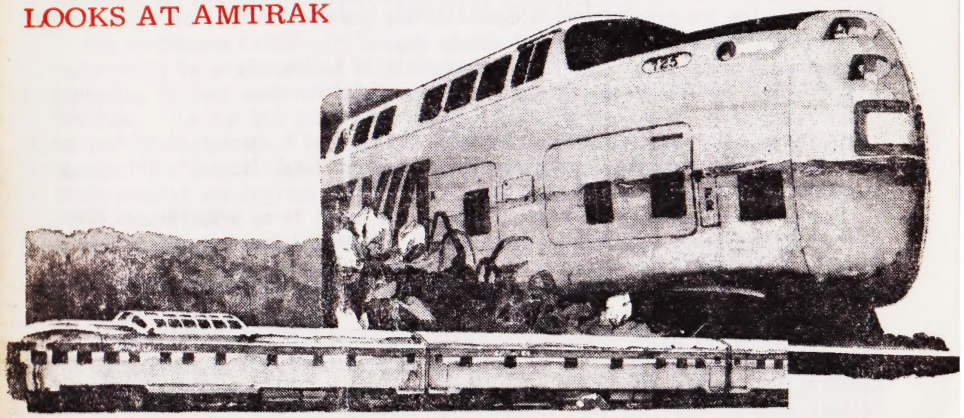
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